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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the five components of preschool program planning. The first component involves reviewing information about child development, developmental characteristics of young children, and the specific needs of children and families enrolled in the program. The second component involves formulating goals that reflect the philosophy of the program and provide the larger framework into which teachers organize day-to-day learning experiences. Sample program goals are provided. The third component comprises designing a classroom environment in terms of planning the space, organizing materials and equipment, and setting up the learning environment. The fourth component involves preparation of a schedule of activities, routines, and transitions that will provide the time frame for implementing the daily program. Preparation of a written daily schedule is considered a critical part of this component, and written policies and procedures that address emergency and routine situations are also required to implement the schedule. The last component relates to determining and developing an appropriate curriculum by identifying strategies to implement planned experiences. Three steps characterize a curriculum planning strategy: (1) brainstorming; (2) designing a theme's implementation; and (3) planning specific activities for the group as a whole and for learning centers. A sample plan for small-group experiences and a chart outlining the physical, social, emotional, creative, and cognitive components of the curriculum are included. Additional resources are also included. Contains seven references. (BAC)

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KENTUCKY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Program Planning

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Introduction

Teachers of young children may be responsible for numerous components of program planning throughout the school year. First, responsibilities will include reviewing information about child development, developmental characteristics of young children, and specific needs of the children and families enrolled in the program.

Another component of planning the program involves formulating a set of goals to identify potential areas of accomplishment for children and families as they participate during the school year. The goals reflect the purpose of the program and emphasize the development of the whole child.

Designing a classroom environment is the third component incorporated as part of program planning. The teacher plans the available space so that it is conducive to the developmental skills and needs of children enrolled in the program. How she designates interest areas, organizes the equipment and arranges concrete materials to encourage discovery and initiative in the learning process.

The fourth component for which the teacher is responsible requires the identification of a time frame for the sequence of daily activities, transitions, and routines experienced by the children and staff members in the classroom. The preparation of a written daily schedule is a critical part of program planning.

Implementation of the schedule may require writing policies and procedures to ensure the safe and healthy care of young children. Written policies and procedures may address emergency situations, such as fire, tornadoes, earthquakes, or accidents. They may include directions for arrival and departure. They may include guidelines for meal times and snacks as well. Additional procedures may address toileting, personal hygiene, and bathing.

The fifth component of program planning is with the home. Communication that relates to the development of a child is important. This component includes the identification of strategies to implement planned experiences with the young children enrolled in your program.

Children enjoy exploring sensorial materials, discovering new ways to do things.

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The Child

Program planning begins with the child. Goals, environment, learning experiences, and learning processes are generated from knowledge about the child.

- ★ The child is a complex individual possessing unique characteristics.
- ★ The child has developmental needs in various areas—physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative.
- ★ The child exhibits typical behaviors which are characteristic of chronological age-level as well as variations in developmental age-level.
- ★ The child's growth and development are continuous and interrelated. Adaptation facilitates continuity in growth and development as the child takes in new information and adjusts existing information to new situations.
- ★ The child's learning is an interactive process between the individual and the physical and social environments.
- ★ The child learns best when physical needs are met; the child learns best when his or her psychological environment is safe and secure.
- ★ The child learns most effectively when real objects and multi-sensory materials are provided through natural play experiences.
- ★ The child builds knowledge (thought processes and concept development) as he or she repeatedly interacts with people, objects, and events.
- ★ The child's memory is associative and needs to be connected to a particular experience or action.
- ★ The child is an active participant in the learning process with individual interests and inner motivation to discover.

Goals

Philosophical Goals

Goals reflect the philosophy or concept of a program. They denote the purposes for the curriculum content and the teaching strategies to be implemented in the program. Goals provide the larger framework into which teachers organize day-to-day learning experiences.

In reference to duration, goals are the long term visions of a program. They serve as the basis from which teachers derive specific objectives to guide curriculum planning. Goals define specific achievements to be attained at a future date. Examples of goal statements include:

1. To involve the parent as a partner in the child's educational experiences at school.
2. To foster the growth and development of the whole child.
3. To provide each child with developmentally appropriate learning experiences through the organization and arrangement of concrete materials and the use of interest areas with multisensory activities.

Program goals need to encompass all developmental areas—social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and creative. Also, they need to focus on the development of positive attitudes, enabling patterns of behavior, learning processes, knowledge, and understanding. Refer to Figure 1 for a sample that may provide a springboard in the construction of goals for your program.

Each program needs to establish goals for the individual children enrolled. These goals address particular areas reflecting individual interests and talents as well as special needs. The identification of goals needs to be a cooperative effort with families to ensure comprehensive planning for each child's growth and development including provisions for health care and social services.

A major goal for preschool programs under KERA is to reduce health, social, and other barriers to learning for individual children. In addition, these goals emphasize the involvement of each young child in valued learning outcomes, such as communication skills, basic concepts, self-sufficiency, group membership, thinking and problem solving skills. Preschool programs establishing goals based on the former considerations transmit quality care to individual children and "customize" program experiences for individual children.

In establishing goals for children with special needs related to speech or other disabilities, individual education programs (IEPs) are developed as a team effort with parents, teachers, administrators, and support personnel as needed. The IEP will address goals for any special services or individualization based on the child's strengths and needs. In regard to individual goals addressed in the classroom setting, the teacher will transform specific information into appropriate strategies and integrate them into the daily schedule of classroom routines and activities to encourage the child's development in target areas.

Individualization for <u>any</u> child enrolled in the program may be facilitated by developing specific strategies and behavioral objectives for specific needs. This may involve making accommodations in the environment; breaking down a task or activity into small steps for successful participation (task analysis); planning cues and physical prompts to assist the child until independent performance of a task can be accomplished; arranging contingencies and natural or logical consequences to motivate the child to respond appropriately. These strategies are all designed to help the child participate fully in the classroom and other natural environments, in the group and learning center activities, in the classroom routines (toileting, meals, arrival and departure), and in routines and family activities at home.

Simple props in the housekeeping play area can stimulate spontaneous drama and role-playing.

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Figure 1

Program Goals

Sample: Early Childhood Program Goals, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Responsible adults want children to:

- Develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward learning, self-control, and a sense of belonging.
- Develop curiosity about the world, confidence as a learner, creativity and imagination, and personal initiative.
- Develop relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults and peers, understand perspectives of other people, and negotiate and apply rules of group living.
- Understand and respect social and cultural diversity.
- Know about the community and social roles.
- Use language to communicate effectively and to facilitate thinking and learning.
- Become literate individuals who gain satisfaction as well as information from reading and writing.
- Represent ideas and feelings through pretend play, drama, dance and movement, music, art and construction.
- Think critically, reason, and solve problems.
- Construct understanding of relationship among objects, people, and events such as classifying, ordering, number, space and time.
- Construct knowledge of the physical world, manipulate objects for desired effects, and understand cause and effect relationships.
- Acquire knowledge of and appreciation for the fine arts, humanities, and sciences.
- Become competent in management of their bodies and acquire basic physical skills, both gross motor and fine motor.
- Gain knowledge about the care of their bodies and maintain desirable level of health and fitness.

Excerpted from Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum Content and Assessment in Programs Serving children Ages 3 Through 8 (A Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. Young Children 46(3), 1991, p. 28).

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

After developing goals the teacher may be ready to plan the space within the room, organize materials, equipment, and setup the learning environment. (Refer to **Physical Environment, Technical Assistance Paper #4** for specific information related to planning the environment, selecting equipment, and designing learning centers.)

Schedule

After examinating the environment, the teacher may prepare a schedule of activities, routines and transitions as he or she allocates a time frame for implementation of the daily program. The teacher prepares a schedule or sequence of events to create a predictable environment. He or she defines the schedule to establish a sense of organization for the adults and a sense of security for the children as they come to recognize a pattern in the sequence of events.

As the teacher plans the sequence of events that make up the daily program, he or she may consider goals for the children, special needs of the group, arrival and departure time, how long the children stay at school, routines, such as eating, toileting, washing hands, transitions, season of the year, and weather conditions.

Consequently, the teacher needs to allocate large blocks of time so the children engage in the activities, develop concentration, make decisions, and pursue individual interests. The teacher needs to include a realistic amount of time for transitions, provide for alternating periods of quiet activities and active experiences, plan for indoor as well as outdoor play, balance small and large group experiences, and utilize individual, self-directed activity along with small group, teacher-guided experiences.

The schedule is an important tool. It defines an orderly, but flexible sequence of activities. It serves as the cohesive element of the day, including the arrangement of routines, transitions and experiences offered in the early childhood environment. Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher to record and post the schedule in written form for easy reference by the staff and parents. Refer to Figure 2 for a sample schedule.

Transitions

Transitions represent periods of time required for preparation of movement from one activity to another. They involve changing location of participation or focus to another segment of the daily schedule. Examples of transitions include warning time, cleanup, and preparation for snack/meal by washing hands or warning time, cleanup and preparation to go outside, or entering group time with action songs and movement activities and pacing down with fingerplays for listening time.

A teacher may discover that transitions consume one-fourth to one-third of the total time assigned to the program day. Therefore, he or she concludes that transitional time needs to be well planned. The teacher may insure smooth transitions by announcing within a reasonable time frame (five minutes before the change in activity occurs) activities will end and new activities will begin. He or she may chose to sing a song or set a timer (five minutes) to indicate that a change in schedule is approaching. Then the teacher may incorporate another cue (song, chant, music box) to signal the transition. Implementing the procedure for the transition in a consistent manner may enhance the predictability of the schedule and foster the development of self-control among the children.

Some transitions may require little time; others including clean-up, washing hands and toileting in preparation for snack or meal may utilize more time. Create pleasant experiences during transitions by singing songs, sharing fingerplays or poems, using sensorial games, engaging in conversation, discussing individual plans, and providing opportunities to enhance self-esteem.

Figure 2

Schedule

Sample Daily Schedule

7:50-8:00	Children Arrive and Prepare for Breakfast
8:00-8:30	Breakfast
8:30-8:40	Transition to classroom (bathroom, wash hands)
8:40-9:25	Independent Choice (self-selection of interest areas, individual planning)
9:25-9:30	Clean-up and transition to large group (Bathroom)
9:30-9:45	Large Group (music, movement, finger plays, plans for small group)
9:45-9:50	Transition to Small Group
9:50-10:25	Small Group (Children choose and/or alternate between groups)
10:25-10:35	Transition to Outside or Indoor Large Motor Activities
10:35-11:05	Outside or Indoor Large Motor Activities
11:05-11:15	Transition and Preparation for Lunch
11:15-11:45	Lunch
11:45-12:00	Story/Evaluation/Dismissal

Routines

Routines are an important part of the child's day. They may include arrival and departure, eating, and toileting. Routines contribute to the physical and emotional well-being of young children. Therefore, they require spotlights in the daily schedule and thoughtful planning.

Arrival and Departure

Teachers, supervisors, and school administrators need to devise a safe plan for arrival and departure. The plan needs to consider the mode of transportation for each child, private or public transport. Areas for parent (car) and school (bus) transportation need to be defined in writing with location maps attached to the written document. An orientation for parents may be implemented to explain and to demonstrate the appropriate procedures. Also, a phase-in may be utilized to acquaint young children with the plan as well as the adults associated with the implementation of the plan. (Children should avoid walking or maneuvering wheel chairs in parking lots; height of children will affect visibility from rear-view mirrors.)

Teachers need to keep current records showing to whom each child is to be released. They need to devise a "Change In Transportation" form to document the request and implementation of new or additional plans. Teachers need to be introduced to any new individual who has been granted permission to pick-up the child. Teachers are instructed to request identification or proof of identification if a new person arrives to pick up a child. Teachers may call the parent or legal guardian to confirm the identification of the person as well as change in transportation plans.

In addition, the teacher and staff need to write a plan indicating how the children will reach the room after arrival and before departure. They need to designate staff members who will serve as greeters and determine subsequent activities along the route to and from the room. (No child should be left unsupervised at any time.)

Furthermore, the teacher and staff need to consider ways to facilitate positive emotional adjustment to the school environment at the beginning of the year. They need to view this time as critical and incorporate some of the following techniques to lessen separation anxiety and to increase positive acclimatization to the school setting:

- Plan and implement home visits - meet the child in familiar surroundings.
- Organize an Open House to introduce parents and child to the classroom, staff, schedule of activities, goals.
- Encourage individual visits by parent and child when the environment is prepared; use casual "drop-in" visits during designated time frames.
- Print letters to children enclosing a "count-down" calendar.
- Request pictures of child and family members to make a school photo album.
- Orchestrate a "Phase-In" plan to gradually introduce children to each other, staff members, schedule, routines, guidance, interest areas.
- Inform parents about behavioral reactions that commonly occur with a child's transition to a group setting. Offer concrete suggestions to support parents during this period of adjustment (4-6 weeks).
- Encourage parents to accompany the child if need be until the child is comfortable and secure.
- If necessary, transitional objects such as blankets, stuffed animals or other "lovey" may be permitted.

Remember. . .Each child is unique; his or her reactions will be reflective of individual temperament, mood, adaptability, previous experience, and family life situation.

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Caring for, feeding and observing animals is a popular learning experience of young children.

Mealtime (Breakfast, Snack, Lunch)

The provision of meals and snacks in the school setting is an important service to the young child. It is critical to wholesome growth, development of healthy food selection patterns and formation of appropriate eating habits.

Initially, the teacher will survey each child's food preference habits to determine individual likes or dislikes, allergies to any food items, sensitivities to any textures, and consideration for special diets, digestive problems, metabolic disorders, or specific feeding practices. A simple checklist may be devised and completed during the home visit or classroom orientation. Also, the child's health record may be used to determine the existence of special needs. The information collected by the teacher will be helpful in communicating specific dietary needs to food preparation staff within the school.

The teacher may need to be prepared to offer special instructions or nutritional guidelines about feeding young children in the school setting. He or she may utilize the resources provided by the local Extension Service, college or university nutrition department or guidelines from USDA to inform the school food preparation staff. In addition, the teacher may share information about nutrition and its effects on the development of the young child, feeding practices and food selections patterns during the preschool years with parents.

Simple considerations need to be made:

- Serve a variety of foods based on individual preferences and cultural backgrounds, availability of fresh or seasonal fruits and vegetables, and variations in food preparation techniques (raw or cooked carrots).
- Serve plain and familiar foods which are easily accepted. However, this is a critical time to introduce new foods gradually so food preferences can be extended.
- Serve simple foods that require the use of single utensils; some finger foods are appropriate.
- Serve desserts that are light and included as a nutritional part of the meal. (Dessert should not be used as a reward or bargaining agent.) Fresh fruit, yogurt, muffin, fruit bread, peanut butter or whole grain cookie, etc. are examples of desserts suitable for young children.
- Serve foods or snacks prepared by the children. Include snack preparation as a part of the planned learning experiences whenever appropriate. Typically, children will be more open to try something new if they have participated in the preparation of the food product.

Seating young children and serving food to them based on their developmental and individual needs may present challenges for the teacher. The preferable service would be in-room delivery of food to each class. This type of service would enable the teacher and staff or volunteers to sit with a small group at child-sized tables and serve the children family style. Also, it would allow the children an opportunity to wash tables, set the individual spaces with placemats, napkin, or eating utensils. This

type of service would foster a sense of group belonging and cooperation, as well.

In some schools this type of service may not be practical or convenient. However, modifications in size of tables and chairs used could be arranged so the children could eat comfortably. Family-style service could be adapted to ensure a pleasant, relaxed social experience for the children and teaching staff.

Hildebrand (1990) shares helpful tips to implement when guiding young children at mealtime:

- Children like to help themselves. Self-service provides opportunities for independent, self-reliant behaviors (pouring, serving).
- Children like lukewarm foods.
- Children can use small spoons and forks.
- Children like meat in bite-size pieces.
- Children can use a stick of toast to push food onto their spoon.
- Children can use social skills or manners to create a safe, pleasant environment in which to eat.
- Children enjoy conversations about themselves, how food helps the body grow and remain healthy, how food was prepared or the source from which it came.
- Children are influenced by the comments adults make about food and the attitude displayed when eating new foods.
- Children like to participate in the clean-up (p. 251-252).

Remember. . . All children and adults need to wash hands before they eat. Extra napkins and utensils need to be readily available in the event they are dropped onto the floor.

Communicating with parents about children's mealtime experiences is an important responsibility for the teacher. Posting the menus on a weekly basis is a helpful plan and including the daily menus of meals in a newsletter or local newspaper will help parents to avoid duplicating the menu at home, adjust allergy medication and provide a suitable alternative for children with special dietary needs. (Some schools post the menu as well as list ingredients for children who have allergies.) Reporting new foods enjoyed by a child, loss of appetite, and reactions to foods eaten at school is important to the parent in assisting the child at home.

Toileting

Teachers and children may experience greater convenience when child-sized toilets are located in each classroom. However teachers and children experience the use of common facilities adjacent to their room or within close proximity to the classroom in most public school situations.

Teachers face challenges in terms of supervision and meeting the developmental needs of children in this area. Adults need to accompany any child who leaves the classroom for toileting. Teachers need to respect individual body processes and time tables for those processes to occur. Adequate staffing with volunteers may assist the teacher and aide in this area of responsibility. Children are unable to control themselves to enable one group "pit stop". This would be unreasonable, inappropriate and unhealthy for the child.

Teachers need to encourage children to flush when toileting process is completed. Teachers need to remind children to flush after they have stood tall; not while they are seated. Remark to the children how thoughtful they are to push the handle so fresh water will fill the bowl for the next person. Flushing helps to keep a clean bathroom for all to use.

Wash hands with soap and water following the use of the bathroom. Dry with paper towels. An incentive may be use of non-allergenic lotion on hands when finished and stored in an attractive dispenser.

When children have accidents at school, they need to be changed without shaming or humiliation. A matter-of fact conversation seems appropriate ("I see you were having a fun time outside. It was hard to stop your play to come inside to the bathroom. Your wet pants must be uncomfortable. Let's find your dry clothes. You can change quickly; then you may go out to play"). Children need a quiet place to change and sometimes require additional reassurance if they think a parent or other individual will be upset with them.

An extra change of clothing for each child needs to be kept in a convenient place within your classroom. Each item of clothing needs to be marked with the child's name by using a laundry marking pen to label. Each child's set of extra clothes needs to be stored in ziplock bags, shoe boxes or plastic storage containers.

Soiled clothing needs to be placed in a ziplock-plastic bag and labeled with child's name. A note may be attached to the bag to explain the circumstances. A phone call to the parent or conversation with parent at the end of the session may be helpful in clarifying the situation.

Safety Plan For Emergency Procedures

As part of classroom maintenance for safety and well-being, children and staff members need to become familiar with emergency procedures for fires, tornadoes, and earthquakes.

General Procedures

1. Post emergency numbers close to phone.
2. Keep children's emergency information in one specific location; include a current list of children and addresses.
3. Attendance records need to be kept near or with children's emergency information.
4. Items 2 and 3 need to be taken with teacher during practice drills and real emergencies.
5. Assign specific responsibilities to each staff member.
6. Prepare a written plan for each emergency situation. Include a map of the exit route, step-by-step procedure or checklist with adult's responsibilities and children's actions for protection.
7. Keep first aid materials adjacent to designated areas.
8. Practice emergency procedures with children and adults (frequently) on a scheduled basis.

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Curriculum

Content

As the teacher determines the appropriate content for young children participating in the program, he or she may incorporate information about developmental and age-level characteristics, individual needs, emerging interests, family situations, ethnic backgrounds, and community resources.

In addition, the teacher may develop content for curriculum from knowledge of relevant theories, research and practical experience with young children. Teachers may enhance content and teaching strategies by incorporating individual philosophies and program models, such as High/Scope, Montessori, Bank Street, and Carolina Curriculum.

Again, the teacher needs to include the developmental areas that constitute wholeness and integration for young children. He or she needs to capitalize on all aspects of their development—physical, social, emotional, cognitive (language and problem solving), and creative (Hendrick, 1990).

Hendrick (1990) identifies a basic list of developmental areas and provides a summary of skills children may acquire as they experience a well-planned program (Refer to Chart 1).

After the content is outlined, the teacher may identify activities to implement the developmental skills, emergent interests, and special needs of the children. Typically, the teacher incorporates activities representing interest areas: art, blockbuilding, dramatic play, language and literature, discovery—sensory (water, sand or grain), science (biological, physical, or social), math and problem-solving, music and movement, nutrition and food preparation, large motor, fine motor and manipulatives, and construction or woodworking to facilitate the development of specific skills. Also, the teacher may utilize field trips or excursions as significant learning experiences for the children.

Planning Techniques

Developing a curriculum plan is an important responsibility for the teacher. Recording the plan in writing is a significant component that provides evidence of long-term as well as short-term planning, achievement of goals, program quality, and interaction of children with materials and experiences.

Nunnelley (1990) defines a specific strategy for planning curriculum. She designates three steps: 1) brainstorming, 2) designing a theme's implementation, and 3) planning specific activities for the group as a whole and for learning centers. A planning strategy provides an organizational structure for making decisions about curriculum (p. 25).

The teacher may find it helpful to complete the process of planning in a series of steps:

1. Select a theme or topic related to the children's interest (rocks, dinosaurs), current meaningful event (circus in town), or relevant family situation (arrival of new baby, hospitalization, vacation, etc.). Brainstorming is a technique that may be utilized to generate ideas for themes or topics.
2. Next evaluate the possibilities for actual use of the topic or theme. The following questions may be helpful: How appropriate is the idea for the children in the group? Are materials and resources available in the area? Will the topic offer learning experiences in all developmental areas? Can the topic be implemented with appropriate stimulation and enthusiasm? Does it provide opportunities for meeting individual needs? Does the topic lend itself to multiethnic or nonsexist education?
3. Investigate topic to develop background or supportive information.
4. Select an emphasis or focus for each day.
5. Identify appropriate vocabulary.
6. Write specific goals for each day.
7. Define concept statements - facts or

Routines in preschool provide numerous opportunities for children to be independent and build self-esteem.

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accurate statements about characteristics, processes, and functions of objects, places, events, or people.

8. Locate or design specific activities for interest areas including activities for outdoor space and motor skills (indoor and outdoor).
9. Plan a project, field trip, or visit by resource person as an integrated, culminating experience.
10. Assemble materials for interest areas, specific activities, group times, and displays or bulletin boards.
11. Invite parents and children to contribute ideas and materials.
12. Evaluate children's interaction and record specific notes.
13. Assess unit implementation to determine effectiveness of experiences, materials, and techniques.

The thematic unit approach affords the teacher many avenues to create an individualized program with high interest and motivation. Also, specific characteristics of the thematic approach enhance the teacher's abilities to integrate the special needs of young children. These characteristics include:

1) Consistency and repetition of topics, skills, and vocabulary over time;
2) Familiarity and relevance of topic to child's interests and life;
3) High potential for generalization of learning due to the incorporation of activities which stimulate life outside the classroom; and
4) Use of theme to provide context in which to discover relationships between self, others, objects, events, space and time (Abraham, Morris, & Wald, 1990, p. 2).

Curriculum planning with a thematic approach adds vitality and enthusiasm to the school setting. Learning becomes an enjoyable, delightful process with theme related activities. Positive attitudes about school as a fun place to learn may be transmitted effectively by this approach.

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Successful group times require careful planning and can include fingerplays, songs, story telling, games, demonstration of materials, and informal discussions.

Individual and Group Experiences

Individual. Individual experiences are incorporated as part of self selection or independent choice time and indoor/outdoor physical activity time. They may be child initiated or teacher guided experiences. Individual experiences may include:

- Time to engage in an activity independently, such as looking at books, sponging water, working a puzzle or painting at the easel.
- Time for response to emergent interests of individuals within group, spontaneous ones as well as planned extension of ideas.
- Time to experience quietness or relaxation with stress-releasing activities.
- Time for self enhancement activities as teacher shares attention with individual child.

Small Group. Small group experiences are organized during self-selection or independent choice time, teacher-guided small group and indoor/outdoor activity time. These experiences may be spontaneous or planned as a part of theme-related activity during small group or self-selection. Small group experiences are excellent opportunities to integrate language and cognitive activities as well as meet the needs of the child socially.

When small group experiences are planned, the teacher may use a simple format to ensure purposeful implementation of the activity and to maximize children's participation. The format may include: 1) Area of interest 2) name of the activity, 3) objective, 4) skills, 5) materials, and 6) step-by-step procedure. Refer to Figure 3 for sample plan for small group experiences.

Large Group. Large group experiences involve teacher-child interactions during circle time and story or music time. The purpose for group time is to create a pleasant event in which everyone participates happily. Therefore, individual needs, interests, and physical abilities to attend may be considerations for planning large group experiences.

Well-planned group experiences provide many opportunities to learn. Hendrick (1990) identifies the components that contribute to a stimulating group time: 1) practice in auditory discrimination, 2) songs, 3) poetry, 4) stories shared by using variety of techniques, 5) fingerplays and action activities, 6) discussions, 7) practice in cognitive activity, and 8) something that is multiethnic or nonsexist (p. 308).

Setting the stage is critical for group time. Sing songs and use action or movement activities to extract the wigglies. Cre-

ate magic by introducing a puppet, placing concrete objects in a gift wrapped box, or distribute items for children's direct participation.

During the circle time it is important to use real or concrete objects to convey the information defined in the concept statements (children need an object to manipulate in order to form mental pictures). Real objects serve as attention getters and help the children to focus.

Maintain a rhythmic pace and appropriate momentum during the group time. A pace that moves in sequence perpetuates an even tempo for the succession of activities that occur. A suitable pace prevents disintegration of the group. Also, brief periods of time, 15-20 minutes, insure more comfortable, harmonious group experiences.

Adaptations for children who experience difficulty in large group settings may include sitting near teacher or aide, touching (rubbing back, hand, or arm) to calm, modifying responses to encourage some level of participation, providing carpet pieces to define space or using a contingency plan to reinforce appropriate interaction within the group situation.

Bringing closure to the group time is important. Review sequence of events, highlight activities or experiences by using relevant concrete materials, rebus charts, or discussion. Plan a special way to form small groups as well as to dismiss children at the end of the day. A well-defined plan will transmit clear expectations about the child's responsibility for participation in the next phase of daily activity.

Figure 3

Examples Of Written Plans For Small Group Experience

1. Area: Science
2. Title of Activity: Magic Mixing Bags
3. Behavioral Objective: Given a zip-lock freezer bag, starch, and powdered tempera paint, the child will be able to measure ingredients, place inside bag, squeeze bags to mix paint and starch, and talk about the different colors forming.
   Skills Emphasized: Following directions, measurement, manual dexterity, observation, making prediction and verbalizing spontaneously.
4. Materials Needed: Zip-lock freezer storage bags (quart size), powdered tempera paint (red, yellow, blue, white, black), liquid laundry starch, masking tape, measuring spoons and liquid measuring cup.
5. Procedure:
   a. Give each child a zip-lock bag.
   b. Help each child measure one-quarter cup of liquid starch; pour into bag.
   c. Help each child measure three tablespoons of <u>two different</u>-colored powdered paints (2 T. of red and 1 T. of yellow); place inside the zip-lock bag.
   d. Seal the bag; reinforce the seal with masking tape. (Make sure any excess air is squeezed out.)
   e. Encourage child/children to squeeze bags <u>gently</u> to mix the paint and the starch.
   f. As children are preparing the magic bags, ask questions to stimulate thinking: What happens when the dry paint touches the liquid starch? Why does the color of the dry paint change? What happens to the thin liquid starch? Why does the starch change in texture? What happens to the starch and dry paint when you squeeze the bag?
   g. When the activity transition is near, review the steps used to participate in the activity using a rebus chart with directions, dictation, or divergent questions for discussion (Maupin, 1989).
6. Adaptations:
   Extra cues may include peer assistance from a partner, simplified questions based on expressive language development, or additional tactual cues. Encourage all children to participate keeping in mind that different skills may be emphasized according to their various levels of development.

As small group experiences are implemented with young children, the teacher may encourage active participation by providing real materials and concrete objects. The teacher may emphasize the processes of discovery and problem solving through experimentation with materials. He or she may stimulate successful involvement by maintaining brief, flexible periods of time.

Components of the Curriculum

Physical Self

In addition to those activities that provide for the health and safety of the children and help them understand and value life, there are those activities specifically for the physical self that should be included in the preschool curriculum. These include activities that provide practice in the following:

- Participating in movement and locomotion activities.
- Practicing static and dynamic balance.
- Developing body and space awareness.
- Practicing rebound and airborne activities.
- Fostering rhythm and temporal awareness.
- Engaging in throwing and catching activities.
- Using daily motor skills.
- Participating in relaxation and tension-releasing activities.

Social Self

Learnings for children's social selves should encompass the following:

- Learning to control unsocial impulses.
- Acquiring socially acceptable strategies for getting what they want.
- Learning to function successfully as a member of a group.
- Finding satisfaction in helping each other.
- Finding pleasure in accomplishing meaningful work.
- Understanding their place in the world, and feeling good about their gender roles and ethnic heritages.

Emotional Self

A curriculum that favors the development of emotional health in children should include opportunities for learning to do the following:

- Separating comfortably from their families.
- Achieving the basic attitudes of trust, autonomy, and initiative.
- Remaining in contact with their feelings while maintaining emotional control.
- Using dramatic play and other self-expressive materials to come to terms with emotional problems.
- Facing reality.
- Beginning to understand other people and feel empathy for them.

Creative Self

Opportunities for children to develop their creative selves should include the following:

- Using a wide range of self-expressive activities.
- Participating in imaginative dramatic play.
- Engaging in creative thinking and problem solving.

Cognitive Self

Finally, the children's cognitive selves should be enhanced by the following:

Fostering verbal ability through:

- Putting their ideas into words throughout the day and enjoying communicating with other people.
- Participating in carefully planned group times.

Developing cognitive skills by:

- Analyzing choices and making decisions.
- Discovering answers for themselves.
- Using the specific mental abilities of:
  - Matching.
  - Perceiving common relations.
  - Grouping.
  - Temporal ordering.
  - Graduated ordering (seriation).
  - Determining simple cause-and-effect relationships (Hendrick, 1991, pp. 38-39).

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Staff should encourage developmentally appropriate independence in the preschoolers.

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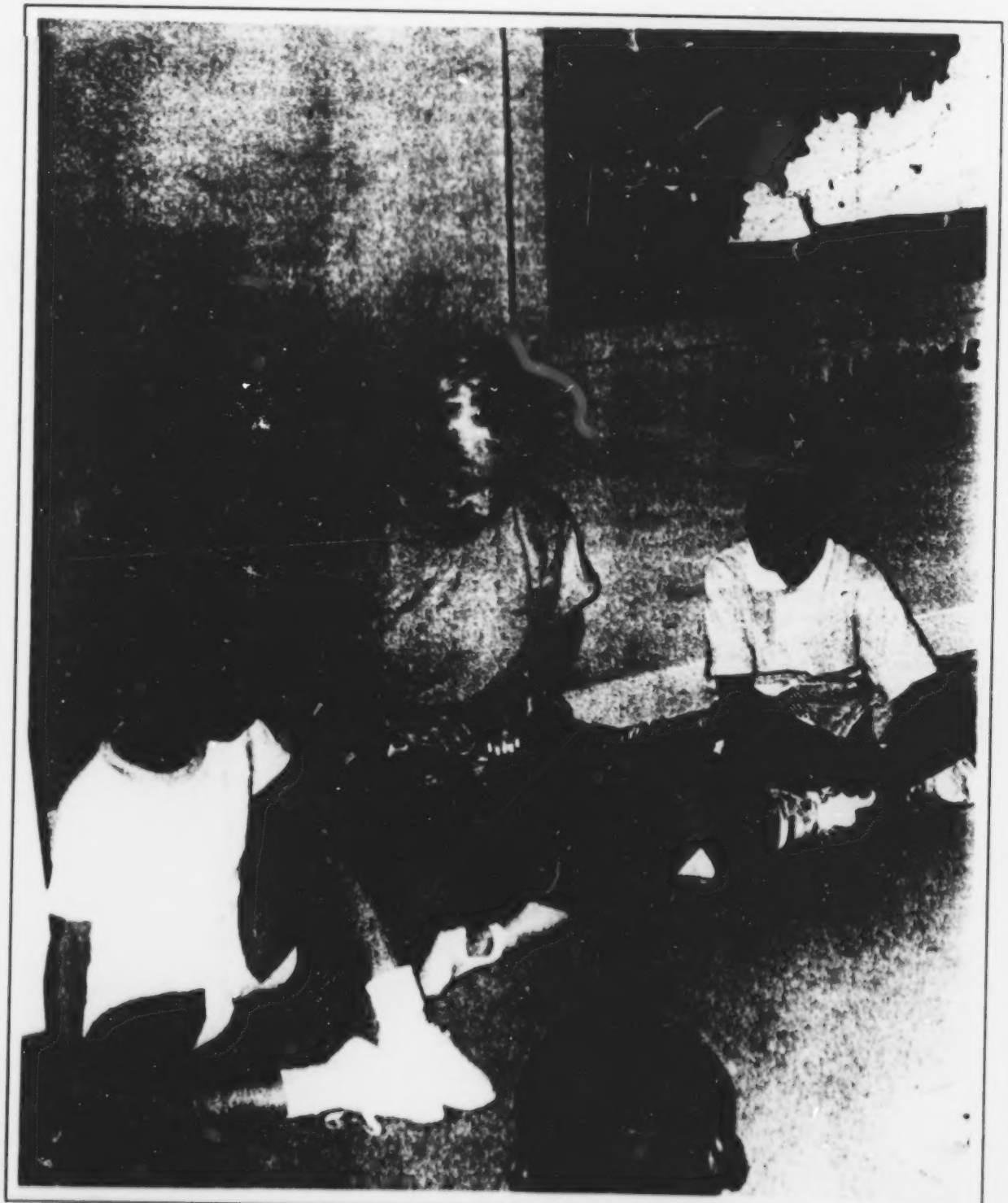

It is not necessary for teachers to know how to play a musical instrument or read music in order to plan and conduct creative music experiences.

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